



# NEWSLETTER

BLM • VERNAL DISTRICT • UTAH

September 1986

The regular quarterly District Newsletter for September was purposely delayed pending the final outcome of two critical district issues: 1) The resolution of the wild horse issue prompted by a court injunction against BLM by the Ute Indian Tribe and, 2) The final disposition of the White River Oil Shale facilities. We are pleased to announce that both issues have been resolved.

## WILD HORSE ISSUE

As far back as 1984, through the Book Cliffs Resource Management Plan, the Vernal District made public its plans to remove two of its three wild horse herds and place them in the Adopt-A-Horse program. The Winter Ridge herd was down to about ten or eleven head from a herd of 40 and does not seem to be able to perpetuate itself. The Bonanza-Red Wash herd was estimated at 40 head. The Bonanza-Red Wash herd was requiring 80 to 90 percent of the District's wild horse funds and manpower and was beset with numerous management problems.

Two problems arose relative to the District's planned wild horse roundup: 1) For the first time, opposition to the removal of the Bonanza-Red Wash herd surfaced. In response to the opposition, a special public meeting was called for the purpose of hearing public concern and to explain the District's proposals. As a result, a group of concerned citizens incorporated to form a group called Wild Horse Preservation and Management, Inc., and pledged support to maintain the herd. District management is committed to work with the group on a trial basis. 2) The second problem surfaced after the roundup of 130 horses with members of the Ute Tribe claiming all of the horses belonged to them! The tribe obtained a court injunction prohibiting BLM from taking any action pending settlement and a trial that resulted in no decision on ownership. What followed was two weeks of negotiation to attempt to reach a compromise settlement.

In the resulting agreement, the tribe acknowledged that BLM did have a wild horse herd in the Bonanza-Red Wash area and agreed to release claim to the 13 horses still roaming the area and to furnish 20 additional wild horses of BLM's choosing from stock existing on Indian Reservations outside of Utah. The tribe will bear the cost of transporting those horses to Vernal and they have 30-days to deliver. The District feels that the addition of new blood into the herd will be very advantageous. The agreement was signed on Friday, October 3. In return, BLM released all of the disputed horses to Tribal members. The fence that contributed to the problem of Indian horses crossing the Reservation boundary on to public lands is now being repaired.

The district plans to delay decision of final removal of the Bonanza-Red Wash herd for approximately three years pending determination of the resolution of trespass and other management problems and the wild horse groups ability to provide assistance. We may then revise the Book Cliffs Resource Management Plan and continue to maintain the herd.

## WHITE RIVER SHALE OIL CORPORATION ISSUE

On December 31, 1985, the White River Oil Shale Corporation (WROSC) relinquished the leases on two tracts known as U-a and U-b totaling over 10,000 acres to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The leases were relinquished because of economic and technological factors.

Facilities on the site had been constructed at the cost of over 40-million dollars. Both BLM and the WROSC felt it would be a terrible waste to tear down the facilities and reclaim the site if there was any possibility that economic factors could change and the facilities could again be used.

What followed was nearly nine months of cooperative negotiations which resulted in the three parent companies of the WROSC depositing a total of one million dollars to a government account with BLM as the beneficiary. The one million dollars will be used to maintain the facilities for future use. In return, the parent companies are released from any future liability concerning